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SUBJECT: FOLLOW UP ON EU BORDER SECURITY SYSTEMS
(C-NC8-00244)

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¶1. In response to reftel, Post has prepared the following information on the status of the European Union's proposed Electronic Travel Authorization System (ETSA), planned updates to the Schengen Information System, and planned Visa Information System. Each component is described below.

¶2. Status of EU Proposal to Establish an EU Electronic Travel Authorization. In a February 2008 communication the European Commission stated it would begin investigating the feasibility of an electronic system of travel authorization (ESTA). The ESTA would be required for all third-country nationals not subject to visa requirements. These passengers would be required to provide data identifying the traveler and providing passport and travel details. This would allow the EU to ensure the person fulfilled entry conditions, without requiring a full visa interview. The Commission will launch a study on the feasibility of this program in 2008. At this point there is no reaction from the European Parliament because no legislation has been proposed.

¶3. The Status of the Development and Implementation of the Visa Information System, Including its Biometric Components. The European Visa Information System (VIS) is planned to be fully operational in 2012, and will be used in consular sections and border crossing points. The system will use biometrics (both facial images and fingerprints) to verify the authenticity of both the visa and its holder. The European Parliament and the European Council adopted an EC regulation on the VIS in early 2008.

¶4. Schengen Information System II. The implementation of the Schengen Information System II (SIS II) has been postponed until September 2009. This system will include information on persons who are wanted for an arrest, third-country nationals who should be refused entry to the EU, missing persons, witnesses, persons required to appear before judicial authorities, persons or vehicles put under surveillance, and certain stolen, or lost objects such as vehicles, firearms, identity documents, or bank notes. SIS II will include the full name (including aliases), physical characteristics, place and date of birth, sex, photographs, fingerprints, nationality(ies), whether the person is considered armed or dangerous, reason for alert, and a reference to the decision giving rise to the alert. The SIS II system will be connected to national SIS systems and be able to interface between the national systems. In addition, the system will provide an encrypted virtual network for the exchange of data between member state authorities.

15. Per requests in reftel, Post is continuing to research the status of European Union consideration of an entry/exit system and the relationship between the improved SIS II and the handling and tracking of student visa holders.

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